CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 22 May 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Berdennikov (Russian Federation)

GE.97-61366 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 764th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, allow me to extend a warm welcome on behalf of the Conference, and on my own behalf, to the newly appointed representative of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Günther Seibert, who is attending the Conference for the first time today. I wish to assure him of our cooperation and support.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, India and Poland. I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ambassador Weston.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): First, Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. You are carrying out your tasks with the dedication and professionalism one would expect of someone with whom it is always an enormous pleasure to work and for whom I have the greatest personal respect. Borrowing and adapting slightly the words which the late Lord Caradon used when speaking of Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov:

"When prospects are dark and hopes are dim,
We know that we must turn to him.
When storms and tempests fill the sky,
Berdennikov's your boy's the cry.
He comes like a dove from the Russian Ark,
And light appears where all was dark.
His coming quickly turns the tide,
The propaganda floods subside.
And now that he has changed the weather,
In complementarity we work together.
God bless the Russian delegation.
I hope this worked in translation."

I should like to draw the attention of the Conference to statements made yesterday by the United Kingdom Prime Minister, Mr. Blair, and by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Cook, in the House of Commons in response to parliamentary questions on the subject of anti-personnel landmines. In his statement, the Prime Minister said, inter alia:

"... we will ban the import, export, transfer and manufacture of anti-personnel landmines. We will also phase out the United Kingdom stocks of such anti-personnel landmines. We will, in addition, make sure that we ban the trade through the United Kingdom of all such landmines. They have done enormous carnage often to wholly innocent civilians including children, and the sooner that Britain gives a lead in this, the better. It is the right and the civilized thing to do."

(Sir Michael Weston, United Kingdom)

In his statement, which followed soon after that of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary said:

"We shall implement our manifesto commitment to ban the import, export, transfer and manufacture of all forms of anti-personnel landmines.

"We will accelerate the phasing out of our stocks of anti-personnel landmines, and complete it by 2005 or when an effective international agreement to ban their use enters into force, whichever comes first. In the meantime, we have introduced a complete moratorium on their operational use, while we participate constructively in the Ottawa Process and push in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva for a wider ban.

"That moratorium will only be suspended if we judge that for a specific operation the security of our armed forces would be jeopardized without the possibility of the use of anti-personnel landmines. In such an exceptional case we would report to Parliament the decision, and the circumstances which led to it.

"We shall also examine how we can make more progress in removing mines already laid across the world."

I believe that these statements speak for themselves. I might make quite clear, however, lest there be any room for doubt about our position with respect to work on this issue here in the Conference on Disarmament: the United Kingdom continues strongly to support the immediate establishment of an ad hoc committee on anti-personnel landmines with a negotiating mandate.

We regret that it has not yet proved possible to reach a consensus on the establishment of such an ad hoc committee. In the interests of achieving such a consensus, the United Kingdom fully supports the immediate appointment of a special coordinator to conduct consultations on the most appropriate arrangement to deal with the question of anti-personnel landmines under agenda item 6.

In the course of such consultations, we would expect that the special coordinator would naturally wish to take account of relevant proposals which have already been put forward in this Conference. In this respect, I might also draw the attention of the Conference to the comments which the Secretary of State made in a press release concerning his statement, in which he said:

"We will also redouble our efforts at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament to get the main export countries to stop selling landmines."

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for his statement and for his very kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of India, Ambassador Ghose.

Ms. GHOSE (India): Mr. President, this is the first time I take the floor in the plenary this year, and I would like to emphasize how pleased we are to see the CD in your experienced and competent hands. I cannot hope to match the eloquence of the previous speaker, but I am sure that you will be able to find ways in which your presidency will conclude with a satisfactory result. You have the assurance of the cooperation of the Indian delegation in your efforts. Appreciation is also due to your predecessors for their determined efforts to carry out a trying and complex mandate. May I also welcome all our colleagues who have joined the CD this year and say, since I am taking the floor for the first time, how much we miss some of the extraordinary persons who were our colleagues till a short while ago.

The multilateral disarmament agenda, as we see it, gives us some satisfaction and some concern. We are extremely encouraged with the entry into force last month of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In this connection we welcome the ratification of the Convention by China and the United States and the statements made to the first meeting of the States parties by President Yeltsin and the Russian Duma. In our view, this Convention is significant not only because it bans the development, production, stockpiling and use of one of the weapons of mass destruction, but also because it is the very first effective and equitable disarmament treaty. Some progress has also been made in our efforts to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), and we look forward to receiving the rolling text of the Chairman at an early date so that actual negotiations can begin in July this year. However, I have to place on record my disappointment that consensus on convening a special session on disarmament eluded us at the Disarmament Commission this year, because of the reluctance of some States to address, multilaterally, the issue of the elimination of nuclear weapons, the third and remaining weapon of mass destruction. It would appear that it is this same issue that has held up agreement in the CD since the beginning of the year, so that despite intensive consultations all that we have been able to achieve so far is the adoption of an agenda.

India has, since the beginning of this session, been participating actively in the consultations, since we believe that the CD must fulfil its role effectively as a negotiating body. Our priorities in the disarmament agenda were clearly spelt out last year in this forum as well as in the General Assembly. We, therefore, have participated in this exercise with the expectation that there would, at the very least, be consideration of a way forward on the issue of nuclear disarmament. This is not just an issue of paramount importance to us, but also for the international community. Over the last several months, calls for the immediate commencement of negotiations leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons have been made from many quarters, including the G-21 proposal of 14 March 1996 in the CD for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament and the programme of action presented to the CD late last year by 28 countries.

Other distinguished voices have also been raised. The Canberra Commission emphasizes three fundamental reasons against the continued possession of nuclear weapons: their inadequate military utility, the risk of accidental or unauthorized launch and the fact that the possession of nuclear

(Ms. Ghose, India)

weapons by only five countries was an unacceptable and unsustainable situation. The Commission's report devotes considerable attention to the arguments usually put forward by the nuclear-weapon States and others who doubt the need for a nuclear-weapon-free world and authoritatively answers each of the objections raised. The Commission, on which, I might add, India was not represented, has suggested an urgent programme of action, commencing with an unequivocal and unambiguous commitment to be made by the nuclear-weapon States for the elimination of nuclear weapons. This report has been formally presented to the Conference on Disarmament and yet we have had no discussions or consideration of the concrete proposals contained in it. Other voices arguing the moral untenability of nuclear weapons include the proposal of the Stimson Center of the United States and the declaration of the 60 retired admirals and generals from all continents - all of whom have been urging the early commencement of negotiations for the total elimination, not only the reduction, of nuclear weapons.

Most significantly, the historic advisory opinion given by the International Court of Justice unanimously called for the urgent commencement and conclusion of negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We believe that it is incumbent on the CD to be responsive to the increasingly insistent international opinion that substantive and meaningful steps be taken towards the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons.

In this context, we welcome the joint statement on "Parameters on future reductions in nuclear forces" issued by the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States. We have noted with appreciation the reaffirmation of the commitment of President Clinton and President Yeltsin to take further concrete steps to reduce the nuclear danger, and that these steps, both START II and the proposed START III, are envisaged to be completed within specific time-frames. We look forward to all nuclear-weapon States joining this process early.

The argument has been put forward that since there is progress in nuclear weapons reductions at the bilateral level, the CD cannot, and indeed should not, undertake nuclear disarmament negotiations, that insistence on discussing nuclear disarmament in the CD could be a setback to the disarmament process, since disarmament is based on security interests. Perhaps we should be clear about the definitions of terms we utilize: no one would wish, I'm sure, to halt or stall an ongoing bilateral and plurilateral process of nuclear weapons reductions: however, to us, nuclear disarmament is the goal, not only a process. Also, if the bilateral and plurilateral negotiations depend, quite validly, on the security perceptions of those engaged in this process, the security perceptions of those who do not possess nuclear weapons also need to be taken into account. And it is here that the CD can and must play its role, and there are specific proposals we can consider: for example, earlier this year a proposal was made to negotiate a commitment by all States for the elimination of nuclear weapons in an agreed time-frame; there is the proposal of the 28 countries for a phased time-bound programme including a proposal for a convention on no use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. There are several such proposals. We believe the CD is the place, the forum with the capacity to negotiate such agreements.

(Ms. Ghose, India)

India was one of the lead sponsors in the United Nations General Assembly in 1993 in proposing a resolution on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). We had participated in the consensus reached in 1995, contained in the Shannon report just before the NPT Review and Extension Conference, but we had also expressed, it will be recalled, our reservations at the time on the tenuous nature of the compromise. Subsequent developments and the recent statements by a number of delegations indicate that these reservations are widely shared. The issue of stockpiles, the inclusion of tritium, the problem of surplus stocks, are some of the grey areas of the Shannon report which appear even more grey after two years. It is our conviction that these can be clarified if we adopt a clear work programme that places the mandate for an FMCT firmly within a multilateral nuclear disarmament process. India remains convinced that an FMCT can be a useful and necessary step, but as part and parcel of a negotiated, phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It is for this reason that we, with other members of the CD, including most members of the G-21, have proposed the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

Our policies in this respect have remained consistent. We are aware that nuclear weapons cannot be eliminated overnight. We realize that a step-by-step approach is necessary, but we are also convinced, that if progress towards nuclear disarmament is to be genuine, these steps must take place within a reasonable and specified time-frame. These steps cannot be repetitive efforts to tighten an unequal nuclear regime, but must be a progression towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. This was the context, it will be recalled, in which we had also visualized a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

However, we are also prepared to start work on other items of the agenda: we believe that some meaningful work could be done if the Ad Hoc Committee on Outer Space is revived: the resolution adopted in the last session of the United Nations General Assembly has given us a mandate to start this work, and it has, we understand, been proposed for inclusion in the programme of work by Canada. We also have noted with appreciation the efforts of Iran to adopt a different approach to the programme of work. We are not averse to considering commencing work on any of the other areas on which there might be consensus.

One issue on which considerable attention has been focused this year has been on the issue of a treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines (APLs). We are also all aware of the initiatives taken in this regard outside the CD. India's position on a treaty to ban APLs was stated by the External Affairs Minister in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in October 1996, when he said: "India is in favour of a non-discriminatory and universal ban on anti-personnel mines, which cripple or kill large number of civilians".

During the negotiations for strengthening Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), India, in response to the damage and destruction caused by the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of landmines to civilian life and livelihood, had made several proposals. Our proposals,

which received little support at that stage, included a ban on transfers, a ban on the use of remotely delivered mines, and a ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines in internal conflicts. Unfortunately, as I have just stated, none of these proposals received much support. We therefore accepted whatever it was felt was achievable last March. We are now in the process of completing formalities to ratify the amended Protocol II at an early date.

India has remained flexible in the current debate over the forum for negotiations for achieving a global ban on APLs. It is clear that an effective and universal ban would be achieved only if the legitimate concerns of all countries are addressed in the negotiations. We believe that a pragmatic, phased approach towards a global ban could be a suitable framework for addressing the security concerns of several countries who still use APLs, in compliance with humanitarian law, for defensive purposes against enemy forces. Our objective is to get an effective and universal treaty - one which will indeed prevent further indiscriminate casualties among civilians. While moving towards a ban on APLs, the international community needs to redouble its efforts for mine clearance and for the transfer of resources and technologies for this purpose so that the mines which are today actually causing death and destruction are removed.

We are prepared to work with all our colleagues to agree on a feasible and practical programme of work for the CD. However, I wish to reiterate once more our position on agenda item 1: Nuclear disarmament remains our primary objective, and our priority. For as long as nuclear weapons continue in the possession of a few countries, international security remains threatened and unstable. We hope that this forum will be able to respond to the expectations that the international community has of it.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of India for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Poland, Ambassador Dembinski.

Mr. DEMBINSKI (Poland): Mr. President, since your term of office as President of the Conference on Disarmament is about to expire, I am pleased to add to the customary congratulations our sincere appreciation of your wise leadership and efforts which you have been making to ensure that the second part of the CD session is more rewarding than has been the case so far. I should like to take this opportunity to express to your predecessor, the distinguished representative of Romania, our gratitude for his dedication and sense of urgency with which he pursued the same objective.

At this time let me also extend a warm welcome in our midst to the new representatives who have joined us at this table, the distinguished Ambassadors Giuseppe Balboni Acqua of Italy and Günter Seibert of Germany. I look forward to close and fruitful cooperation with them in our common endeavours. I would also like to congratulate Ms. Katharine Crittenberger on her accession to the first line at this table.

(Mr. Dembinski, Poland)

The primary motive behind my brief statement today is a sense of profound disappointment over our work programme, or rather the lack of it. It is with a sense of growing frustration - present also in the interventions of other speakers - that my delegation sees the Conference on Disarmament unable to overcome the embarrassing stalemate and recognize the grave jeopardy into which this situation puts the future of the Conference. It is frustrating to see the deplorable loss of precious time that could be put to productive use, in the interest of peace and international security. It is a frustration at the waste of scarce United Nations funds. It is also a frustration at the sense of dissatisfaction which the outside world must feel at our performance this year. Surely, one can argue that after years of strenuous efforts, resulting in two major multilateral accords, the CD members deserve time off. Of course, this line of thinking need not go particularly well with legislators and taxpayers in our respective countries. Sometimes it is suggested that the Conference on Disarmament is not an assembly line where multilateral disarmament accords are put together one after another, year after year. But then, if we want the CD to live up to its image, if we want it to retain its relevance - so far beyond question - we, its members, must say that, well, enough is enough. We have no more time to waste in the CD, especially at a moment when its two latest products - the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty - are receiving independent international status.

As we know, no CD member is obligated in the exercise of sovereign rights to accept or adhere to any treaty worked out and adopted by the Conference on Disarmament. It would, therefore, seem only fair to expect that by the same token, members would refrain from blocking proceedings of this body. After all, preventing others, often a majority, from negotiating such international instruments as they deem important or urgently needed may be construed as denying them the chance to exercise their rights. In Poland's view, we are duty-bound to reach an agreement without further delay on a programme of work that includes constructive negotiations on two issues, both with clear treaty potential: the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for weapons and other military purposes and a ban on anti-personnel landmines. In our considered opinion, the Conference on Disarmament has no right to temporize any longer in that regard for a number of reasons. Here are some of them: The cold war confrontation and its threats are now but an echo of a distant past; the NPT features as a permanent mainstay of a global non-proliferation regime; nuclear disarmament is making steady progress and, as confirmed by the recent Russian-American summit meeting in Helsinki, will continue on this path; all five nuclear-weapon Powers, once again, in an important collective declaration at the PrepCom meeting in New York, are reaffirming their commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty; finally, let us be mindful of the relevant General Assembly decisions: resolution 48/75 L on cut-off, which was approved by consensus, and resolution 51/45 S on APLs, which was approved without a dissenting vote. Both of these resolutions call on the CD to take specific action on their subject matter.

These considerations notwithstanding, our present quandary has no justification in the CD record either. As we recall, the Conference on Disarmament resolved to establish an ad hoc committee on a cut-off; and agreed on the broad "Shannon formula" as its mandate back in 1995. So, as far as

(Mr. Dembinski, Poland)

substance is concerned, the ground has been already broken. That consensus decision stands if one truly respects the rules of procedure. To my knowledge no one has ever questioned these rules, much less denounced them. Thus in regard to cut-off, we would not be starting from scratch. All we need is to take a procedural decision to name the Committee Chairman and have that subsidiary body discharge its mandate. By allowing, inter alia, for the consideration of stocks, the language of the mandate takes due account of all legitimate concerns. If we disclaim linkage, one wonders why agreement is still elusive on cut-off.

Let me now turn to the anti-personnel landmines (APLs) issue. The Polish delegation has been on record for quite some time, both in the CD and in the United Nations General Assembly First Committee, as believing that for humanitarian, international security and disarmament reasons, the question of anti-personnel landmines should be urgently addressed. We kept indicating that, in our view, the CD could conceivably serve as a suitable venue. However, we welcomed the "Ottawa Process" and had no hesitation to associate with its ultimate goals.

To promote these goals and heeding calls of the international community, including those emanating from the 1996 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Review Conference, the relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions and the Ottawa meeting last September, Poland imposed a temporary moratorium on international transfers of APLs. I can now formally inform the CD that this moratorium, on its expiry at the end of 1997, will be replaced by a permanent ban of indefinite duration. The Polish Parliament has also started appropriate ratification procedures in respect of the "landmine" Protocol II to the CCW Convention.

The Polish delegation is greatly encouraged by the growing recognition that there need be neither contradiction nor unhealthy competition between the CD and the "Ottawa Process" - indeed, that there is a complementarity of efforts. We would wish that recognition to be translated without further delay into concrete action by the CD. To this end, at the close of the first part of our session, Poland joined Chile and Finland in suggesting that a special coordinator be appointed with a view to exploring, through intensive consultations, the most appropriate arrangement through which the Conference on Disarmament could deal with the question of APLs. The three delegations suggested, it now appears over-optimistically, that he should present a report to the CD by the end of May.

Having said that, let me make explicit our support for the initiative which Hungary and Japan took last Thursday in submitting a draft mandate for an appropriate ad hoc committee. Indeed, as far as the Polish delegation is concerned, we would have preferred the CD to take positive action on that proposal and we urge it to do so without delay.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Poland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see the Ambassador of Germany. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): Mr. President, since it is the first time I am taking the floor in the plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament, I should like to take this opportunity to express my deep satisfaction at seeing you assume the presidency of this Conference, and we are very grateful for the dedication and the wisdom with which you are carrying out your task. I should also like to thank you and Ambassador Dembinski for your warm words of welcome.

It is for me both an honour and a particular challenge to be appointed Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament. In the course of its history, and particularly during recent years, the Conference on Disarmament has achieved outstanding successes. Treaties such as the ban on chemical weapons and the comprehensive test-ban treaty are making a lasting contribution to peace and security. The CD has thus set very high standards for itself.

I am looking forward to working with you and all the other distinguished Permanent Representatives towards making the CD live up to these standards in the future in order to make this world a safer and more peaceful place.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for his kind words. Now I give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Australia): Mr. President, as this is the first, and possible the last, opportunity I will have to acknowledge your assumption of the presidency, let me say that my delegation has welcomed and appreciated the excellent way in which you have guided, and continue to guide, our deliberations in keeping with the pattern set by your predecessors this year. I also take the opportunity to welcome new colleagues to the Conference.

Australia's commitment to progress in the Conference on Disarmament, after years of successes, is well known. Also well-known is our commitment to the negotiation of a legally binding international regime which effectively outlaws anti-personnel landmines as a weapon of war and civilian terror, and which complements all other processes seeking this end. With that in mind, I have the pleasure to table on behalf of Australia the following draft decision in the Conference on Disarmament, and I will read what it is I propose. It is headed:

"Draft decision

"Without prejudice to its ongoing efforts to establish the programme of work for its 1997 session and in order to facilitate them the Conference on Disarmament decides:

"1. To appoint a special coordinator to conduct consultations on the most appropriate arrangement to deal with the question of anti-personnel landmines under agenda item 6.

(Mr. Campbell, Australia)

"2. The Special Coordinator shall take into consideration all relevant proposals, present and future.

"3. The Special Coordinator shall present an early report to the Conference on Disarmament."

I would like to ask you to convene the Conference in informal consultations immediately following this plenary session to discuss this proposal. I am aware that there are many views on this subject in this room, many ideas on language, some of which have already been formally tabled in this Conference. This language, as you know, has been carefully crafted to seek a way through these various positions and can be further examined in these informal consultations in what I hope will be a constructive and positive spirit.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Australia for his statement and his kind words.

(continued in Russian)

Distinguished delegates, you have heard the proposal made by the distinguished Ambassador of Australia, who made a proposal which he read out and also proposed that we immediately convene consultations to consider that proposal. I can see that the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco has asked for the floor.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): I would like to thank the Ambassador of Australia for his proposal. In general, the Australian delegation has always made us accustomed to constructive proposals, and I think this is one of them. I would like to reiterate that my delegation is never against informal discussions of this type, because this always enables us to share our viewpoints and to learn about the ins and outs of the issues put before us. But I must say as of now that what I would like in order to have a useful discussion is perhaps to get the proposal and send it to our capitals and then afterwards we could discuss it. But I am definitely not refusing to discuss the matter. Nevertheless I can tell you as of now that I have no instructions from my capital on this sort of question, insofar as I get the impression that views are divided on this issue, which has been mentioned since the beginning of this session. So with that comment I will not oppose these consultations, but I can tell you at the outset that by far the greatest part of my participation will consist of listening.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco for his statement. I understood him to say that Morocco will not object to convening an informal meeting. I see that the distinguished representative of Cuba has asked for the floor. I give him the floor.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Simply, and very briefly, it seems to us that what the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco has said may be applicable to other countries. It is to us. I think it would

(Mr. Amat Fores, Cuba)

facilitate the work that is being proposed if we could obtain the proposal and analyse it and consult with our foreign ministries, and then seek guidance which would enable us to come much better prepared to tackle a discussion and a debate thoroughly and seriously. Independently of the position that our country holds, we would also be ready to take part in this analysis, this debate, but I think the outcome might be a bit vague if at the end we could not take a decision and we would not be able to reach any conclusion. So we support what the distinguished representative of Morocco said and we feel this is the way we ought to act.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Cuba for his statement. I am in a somewhat difficult position. On the one hand, I have a proposal from the distinguished Ambassador of Australia to convene consultations now to consider this question. Two speakers who spoke after that proposal have said that on the whole they do not object but they have doubts about the possibility of reaching any concrete conclusions at the end of such a discussion. In my view, on s'engage et on voit - you get involved and then you see what happens. So, if there are no objections, I would propose that we should now suspend our meeting, and in 10 minutes convene in room 1 open-ended consultations on the proposal made by the distinguished Australian Ambassador, and hold such consultations. We will see what transpires and then return to this room and conclude our meeting. Are there any objections to that approach? I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco): I should like to make two remarks: I would rather have the meeting here because there are too many people, and I do not think we can all fit in room 1. That is my first remark. My second remark is that we do not need to come back here because nothing will change between now and then. As I told you, I do not have instructions and I do not see why we should come back here. A third remark is perhaps that we should extend our discussions to any other subject that any delegation might wish to raise regarding the programme of work.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Morocco for his comments. As for the room in which we should meet, I have no preference. I am prepared to change my proposal so that we would meet here. But as regards resuming the plenary session, that clearly is necessary because we will reach some conclusion. Perhaps Morocco's position may be the very one that he referred to. But we will probably hear the views of other delegations as well. The distinguished representative of Sri Lanka has asked for the floor.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): Briefly, I should like to make two points. One refers to the comment made by the Ambassador of Morocco, and that is that it would be desirable for us to meet in this room rather than in room 1, given the number of delegations. Secondly, if we are going to have any discussion on the proposal made by the distinguished Ambassador of Australia, it would be helpful for us to have the text of the proposal before we start consultations.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Sri Lanka. I would like to inquire of the representatives of the secretariat when we can get the text introduced by the distinguished representative of Australia.

(continued in English)

I am informed that it will take 10 minutes. In 10 minutes you will get the proposal, as I understand it, in one language only though, in English.

(continued in Russian)

The distinguished Ambassador of Nigeria has asked for the floor.

Mr. ABUAH (Nigeria): I should like to join my voice to the comments just made by the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco on the text which has just been introduced by our colleague from Australia. Like the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, I am aware that some of us have not received copies of this text, and I believe it is normal for us to have a text before us before we can have any informal consultations on it.

But beyond that, I believe I can say that the proposal about the APLs is very interesting. The damage caused by APLs to our structures back in the continent of Africa, destruction of lives and property, is immense. The distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom has pointed to some of these effects. It is a proposal about how to put an end to the carnage. We support that. But our capitals - in my case, our capital in Abuja - will have to pronounce themselves on the text before we can proceed. I do not know whether informal consultations on the text as read out by the distinguished Ambassador of Australia can do very much at this stage. I wonder if time should not be allowed for Governments and representatives of Governments gathered here to get copies of the text, refer it to Government, and return to the CD for consultations about the way forward.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Nigeria. If I understood his comment correctly, he suggests that we should not hold an informal meeting now but that we should give Governments an opportunity to study this proposal introduced by Australia. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Nigeria.

Mr. ABUAH (Nigeria): Maybe I am partly responsible for the misunderstanding. While it is important for my Government to have a chance to look at this text and pronounce itself on it and convey appropriate instructions to us, we do not stand in the way of the Conference and the informal meeting to consult on the draft decision. But as far as Nigeria is concerned, we do not have any instructions to consider it because our Government has not even seen it.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Nigeria, who has clarified his position. As I understand it, he is not objecting to the holding of an informal meeting. I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Cuba.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Reflecting on the proposal being discussed at the moment, we are asking ourselves, and we wish to ask the Chair and the rest of the participants: why are we going to embark on a discussion of one proposal when we have also been studying others? There are proposals from the representative of Iran, from the representative of Egypt, and from several other countries, and suddenly we cast aside those other proposals and start considering the one formulated today by the distinguished representative of Australia. So from a procedural point of view, what happens to the other proposals? What is our situation with regard to the other proposals? Why are we discussing this one in this way and not the others? This is a question we are asking ourselves and we are thinking that perhaps we could have some clarification on it so as to understand the step we are going to take.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Cuba for his statement and the question he asked. The answer is very simple, because the distinguished representative of Australia has made his proposal and has made an official proposal for the immediate holding of consultations on this question. That is precisely why the President has raised this question before the entire membership of the Conference. As for other questions, I can inform distinguished delegates that at yesterday's Presidential consultations all these questions were raised and the discussion with the participation of the group coordinators showed that there had been no changes in the positions of the groups and that unfortunately there were no points of convergence on these questions. In this connection these questions are not being proposed and have not been proposed by any of the coordinators for urgent discussion. And the President is not proposing them either, in view of the situation. As for the proposal from Australia, this is a new proposal which was made at this meeting with a proposal for immediate consultations on it.

We are trying to reach a decision on this specific proposal. I made a proposal as to how in practice we should implement the Australian proposal. Several speakers have said that unfortunately they have no instructions and they have their doubts about the outcome of such consultations, but even so they do not object to holding such consultations. In these circumstances, once again I ask the same question. If nobody objects, then we have to follow the proposal which was made by the distinguished representative of Australia. If anybody objects, then obviously we won't have consensus and we can't hold anything. But since nobody has objected, what else can we do but follow the proposal made by the distinguished representative of Australia? The situation is very simple, it seems to me.

The distinguished Ambassador of Morocco has asked for the floor.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): Thank you, Mr. President, for that explanation, which has clarified things. I would just like to say that the Ambassador of Australia has made a proposal. I will make a second one. I would like to include the efficiency of the methods of work of this Conference in the consultations that you wish to hold after the formal meeting, because quite clearly we are no longer respecting the traditions of

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

this Conference. In more than two years I have never had before my eyes anything that we had to discuss immediately and come back to the plenary to take a decision. I do not remember this as being a usual practice in this Conference. I believe that the Ambassador of Australia simply suggested that we hold consultations after this plenary; he did not say that we had to come back to take a decision on his proposal. That is the first comment I would like to make. So if you want to hold consultations after this plenary and stop there, and then we will see, because as some people have pointed out, we have to go back to our capitals, and if there is a consensus I would be very happy to be able to tell my capital that there is a consensus in the Conference, and so what does Morocco want to do on this matter? I would be very happy to transmit that kind of message, but I would like to include in the proposal made by the Ambassador of Australia another question, that is, the efficiency of the working methods of this Conference. So we will have two questions to study in the informal consultations without going back to the plenary because, as I have already said, I have no instructions, and so if we come back to the plenary, we cannot have any positive results, so what is the point in coming back? That is why I asked you for an explanation of why we should come back to the plenary.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco for his statement and the proposal he made. Have I understood correctly that the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco is proposing a slight change in the subject of possible informal consultations by expanding it and including an additional issue? Have I understood correctly that if this expansion does not take place, then he objects to the holding of consultations exclusively on the Australian proposal?

I see that the distinguished representative of Morocco is not objecting to the Australian proposal.

The distinguished Ambassador of India has asked for the floor.

Ms. GHOSE (India): I had not meant to take the floor in a formal plenary on this procedural debate. It was my understanding of your proposal, Mr. President, that if we were to convene in an informal meeting, as proposed by the delegation of Australia, we would necessarily have to reconvene to formally conclude this plenary session. Regardless, a formal conclusion of the plenary today would have to take place at some point, particularly as I believe this is the last time that you will be President and you will be handing over the presidency over the weekend. That will enable you to give your concluding remarks, so I think that in that sense there should not be an objection to a formal reconvening of the plenary to enable the President to make his concluding remarks, whatever they might be, related or unrelated to the discussions in the informal consultations. This was my understanding. I do not know whether we can solve questions so fast in this particular room, but we are all willing to give it a try.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of India for her understanding and for her statement. The distinguished Ambassador of Morocco has the floor.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco): I think that if that is the understanding, I have no objection to coming back to the plenary, but it would be more efficient that you make whatever statement you want to make now, Mr. President, because, as I told you, the result is obvious to me. We will listen, we will report to our capitals, but I am not sure that you can draw any other conclusions. It seems that what Ambassador Ghose is saying is that it is difficult in maybe one hour's time to do anything that would allow you to say something more than you have already prepared. But, of course, you are the President and I am a delegate, so you decide, as long as we have the understanding that Ambassador Ghose has just outlined.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, first of all I would like to thank you for the explanation you provided about our earlier formulation, but in addition to the explanation you have given us, I have new doubts, because according to what you said, in the Presidential consultations that you held yesterday, there was no consensus on the other proposals, and my uncertainty, and my question, in that case is: was there any consensus about mines, to the effect that we are going to have consultations today, to take decisions and to return to the plenary to discuss the matter? Did they reach agreement and arrive at consensus on the question of mines? In our view this subject is on an equal footing with the other proposals that have been put forward. If there is no type of consensus on this we cannot see any reason for this haste in the specific case of the formulation made today by the distinguished Ambassador of Australia. So I am still assailed by these doubts, and I would really like some clarification on them.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Cuba. Well, distinguished delegates, we have a dilemma. We have a proposal from the distinguished representative of Australia concerning the holding of immediate consultations. I still haven't heard a single voice against that, although I have heard quite a number of doubts expressed concerning the usefulness of holding such a meeting. I am in your hands. The President as such has no hidden agenda. I want to do my duty. I would like to hear advice from you as to what I should do. The distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Perhaps it is time once again to go back to the lyrical praise which Ambassador Weston extended to you, Sir, at the beginning of this meeting. Certainly, we are in need of some poetry, if nothing else.

With regard to the Australian proposal, my delegation of course has no difficulty in entering into informal consultations, all the more so because I believe that it was the Pakistan delegation which was the first to propose, on 30 January, the idea of the creation of a special coordinator on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. However, I believe that it is the tradition of this Conference that we respect the views of all concerned, and I have no doubt that in any informal consultations which you convene, that tradition will continue to be respected and every delegation will have the opportunity to express its viewpoint with regard to the issue under discussion, so I have no hesitation in agreeing to informal consultations. That is the tradition of

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

this Conference. If there are positions with regard to the formulation or with regard to other issues and other proposals, I am sure that every delegation will be within its rights to raise this in the course of the informal consultations, and in the light of those discussions, you will draw the appropriate conclusions or inconclusions, as the case may be. Then we can proceed further. Perhaps it would be useful to adjourn this meeting and convene in informal session where all views and positions can be aired off the record.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Pakistan. Is the Conference prepared to follow that advice? I see no objections. Thus I will now suspend this meeting and in 10 minutes in this room I will begin open-ended informal consultations.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 6.10 p.m.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): The 764th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is resumed.

Distinguished delegates, during the break important and I believe useful informal consultations took place on the proposal made by the distinguished representative of Australia which was put forward at this meeting. At the present time I cannot report that these consultations have led to any concrete result. As I understand it, they will be continued next week. I now intend to say a few words in the form of concluding observations.

When I took up my post as President of the CD, I fully realized the scale and the difficulties of the problems confronting the Conference, the solution of which must bring our forum to a genuine solution of the questions on the disarmament agenda, which have become ripe for multilateral consideration. In so doing I drew on the results which had been achieved by my predecessors as President in 1997, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea and the representative of Romania in the CD. In particular, as you know, the agenda was adopted, intensive multilateral and bilateral consultations were held, which dealt both with the essence of the problems facing the Conference and with organizational arrangements for their consideration. I should like to express my sincere gratitude for the major efforts which were made by my distinguished predecessors.

As the representative of Russia, I must note that during the period when my country has occupied the post of President of the CD, important events have taken place from the point of view of real progress in the area of arms control and disarmament. A Russian-American summit took place in Helsinki, and the documents generated there on disarmament issues have been circulated at the Conference. The negotiations on the Founding Act between Russia and NATO were successfully concluded. A five-party agreement was signed on arms reductions in the area of the border between the former Soviet Union and China. The Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons entered into force. Also during this period, the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference was successfully held, attended by many CD representatives. It seems to me these events show that it would be

an exaggeration to project the difficulties which the CD has encountered recently onto the world outside this magnificent room. On the whole, the process of arms control is, as they say, "alive and well". We can only regret that the same cannot be said about the state of affairs in our Conference.

As you know, during my term of office as President, issues related to the adoption of a programme of work for the CD, both taken as a whole and each individually, have been discussed at the weekly Presidential consultations with the participation of the coordinators of the regional groups and China, and during my many bilateral contacts with individual delegations. Within the rigid framework circumscribing the work of the President of the CD, attempts were made to pursue any emerging possibilities for agreeing on a programme of work. I am grateful to the coordinators of the groups and all delegations for the activeness and perseverance they have shown in the search for acceptable solutions. During this period, the Conference had before it new documents such as the proposal from the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the CD's programme of work, the proposal by Chile, Poland and Finland to appoint a special coordinator to conduct consultations on the most appropriate arrangement to deal with the question of anti-personnel landmines, the draft mandate submitted by Hungary and Japan for an ad hoc committee on anti-personnel landmines and the draft mandate proposed by Egypt for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, as well as other proposals.

I note with satisfaction that these and earlier proposals for organizing the CD's work have been thoroughly studied by many delegations, and intensive negotiations have been and are continuing to be conducted on them. But despite that, it has not been possible to reach consensus on the programme of work for the CD at this stage. I will not go into my understanding of the reasons for this situation - to do so might be improper for the President. I will say only that evidently we all have to reconsider carefully what we actually expect of the CD and what we can realistically achieve from it at this stage.

I must admit that in the last few days we were close to taking a small but practically important step. I refer to the establishment of the post of special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, which is unequivocally supported by the Russian Federation as well. I hope that the efforts in this area will be pursued and that this matter will be resolved as soon as possible.

The question of further expansion of the membership of the CD also occupied its proper place in our consultations in the Conference. I can state, I think, that there is already broad agreement about the possibility of establishing the post of special coordinator on that problem. However, on this issue too there has been no tangible progress so far. I hope that everyone will agree with me when I say that resolving the question of expanding the membership of the CD must not be drawn out indefinitely.

I should sincerely like to express my warmest and best wishes to the new President of the CD, the distinguished Ambassador of Senegal, Mrs. Diallo. She can fully count on our support in the search for constructive solutions to

(The President)

the difficult problems facing the Conference. I should also like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. V. Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, all the secretariat staff and the interpreters for their inestimable assistance in organizing and carrying out the work of the Conference. I thank all the delegations to the Conference on Disarmament for their active cooperation with the President.

(continued in English)

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will take place on Thursday, 29 May 1997 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.765
29 May 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 29 May 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mrs. Diallo (Senegal)

GE.97-61389 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 765th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to make an introductory statement. It is a great honour for me to take up the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament on behalf of the Republic of Senegal. I would like to assure you that I will spare no effort to discharge the duties of the presidency during this difficult period which the Conference on Disarmament is going through. First of all I would like to express my profound gratitude to my predecessor, Ambassador Grigori Berdennikov of the Russian Federation, for the efforts and talent he displayed during his term of office. I would also like to tell him again how much I enjoyed my stay in his country as the Ambassador of Senegal. I am also grateful to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, as well as the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and all the members of the secretariat for the wise and essential assistance which they are sure to give me.

The Conference on Disarmament is passing through a crucial period in its existence, and at present is in an uncertain situation in which the spirit of consensus that has always helped it to overcome obstacles which at first sight might seem insurmountable seems to have been overshadowed by the prevalence of suspicion in which the slightest proposal made by any country or group of countries is immediately questionable. I think this is especially regrettable because some countries such as mine, which have just been admitted as full-fledged members, intended to participate fully in the work of this body, which represented in their eyes the vigour and effectiveness which multilateral diplomacy should display. This participation in the work of the international community's sole multilateral negotiating body seemed to us to be all the more exciting because the Conference had achieved undeniable successes by negotiating and drawing up treaties and conventions which guaranteed still better the future of coming generations. I will simply recall the most recent ones - the Convention on Chemical Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty.

Given those successes, we viewed the future as promising and we hoped that the Conference was not going to stop when it was doing so well but would continue to forge ahead and tackle the other important issues which had been before it since it was created, in the area of both nuclear and conventional arms, including anti-personnel landmines. Unfortunately, and we deeply regret this, the Conference on Disarmament seems to have become bogged down since the opening of this session in sterile considerations which have little to do with this body's wholly justified solid reputation of effectiveness and seriousness. Perhaps all of this, is, after all, just a tricky patch following the intensive efforts made last year to complete the draft comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty. We would venture to hope today that reason will prevail and that the Conference, thanks to its usual wisdom, will find a dynamic consensus in order finally to adopt a programme of work duly taking into account the interests of all sides, the climate and political realities of the post-cold-war period.

(The President)

I would be particularly reassured by such a development because I represent a country, Senegal, which is known for its spirit of peace and dialogue, a country which is a party to all the treaties and all the conventions drawn up in the area of disarmament; a country which gives priority to establishing brotherly and mutually beneficial relations with all States in its subregion and its continent, Africa, a country which has no intention, either today or tomorrow, of acquiring weapons of mass destruction; a country whose leaders consider that all the wealth swallowed up in research and development or the acquisition of such weapons would be better applied to development and the welfare of mankind as a whole. This is why Senegal, through its head of State, President Abdou Diouf, never lets slip an opportunity to praise the merits of the "peace dividend". This is also why Senegal welcomed the signature in Cairo, Egypt, of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. In the same context allow me here to commend South Africa, which unilaterally decided to divest itself of nuclear weapons. Finally, this is why Senegal joined 27 other countries of the G.21 to draw up a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons (CD/1419) and remains in favour of establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament within this Conference. We believe that the establishment of such a committee would not in any way prejudice the praiseworthy efforts undertaken by the nuclear Powers to reduce their nuclear arsenals. We welcome those efforts and urge their continuation. But we are not convinced that negotiations in the area of nuclear weapons should remain exclusively in the purview of the nuclear-weapon States. The involvement of the international community is essential because transparency and confidence are essential in such a sensitive area.

Another issue of particular interest to Senegal is that of anti-personnel landmines. We will not elaborate on the ravages wrought in our continent and elsewhere in the world by this veritable scourge. My country is participating in the Ottawa Process and we would like to take this opportunity to thank the Canadian Government for its welcome initiative. We consider that the Conference on Disarmament, for its part, could find appropriate machinery to study this question. As far as Senegal is concerned, we will join any consensus on this matter, as we will also join consensus on the way to deal with the other items on the agenda of the Conference. But what my country could not accept is that the Conference should try to ignore the question of nuclear disarmament, whose importance no longer needs demonstrating. Interesting proposals have been made in the Conference for a fair and equitable compromise on a balanced programme of work from which all members of the Conference could benefit. I hope that reason and wisdom will prevail to preserve and strengthen the Conference's credibility and enable it to achieve the breakthroughs which the international community expects of it.

On the speakers' list for today I have the representative of Sudan, Ambassador Sahlool. I give him the floor.

Mr. SAHLOOL (Sudan): Permit me at the outset to express the gratitude and appreciation of my delegation to address the Conference on Disarmanent on an item which is of great concern to my country.

(Mr. Sahlool, Sudan)

The Sudan has had to endure the ravages of a civil war since 1955, and although some major steps have recently been taken to achieve a final settlement of the conflict, by the signing of a peace agreement with seven rebel factions only last month, there is a lot to be undertaken before a final peaceful settlement is achieved. However, the Sudan has to deal with a more urgent problem, namely, the resettlement of the displaced persons in the areas under government control. The major impediment to the implementation of the resettlement programme and the rehabilitation efforts is the clearance of the mines which have been extensively planted in the conflict-affected areas by the warring factions during the civil war.

The Sudan ranks third after Angola and Mozambique in suffering from the scourge of landmines in the African continent. It has initiated a demining campaign, and is therefore keen to solicit international assistance for its mine clearance activities. In this respect, I am happy to report that a number of donors, including some in the United States, have pledged support for the demining activities, which we hope should commence where hostilities have ceased definitively. Talks have commenced between the Government of the Sudan and the Mine Clearance and Policy Unit (MCPU) of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA). However, and as with all DHA-supported programmes, the capacity to implement is dependent on support from the international donor community. The Sudan therefore calls upon the international community to give the MCPU of the DHA every possible assistance to enhance its capacity to be able to monitor the prohibition of landmines in all international conflicts.

We believe that this Conference should be instrumental in keeping the international debate on a global ban on landmines on track, and it is encouraging to note that the problem of anti-personnel landmines is on the agenda of this session. In this respect, the Sudan welcomes the proposal to establish an ad hoc committee on a "ban on anti-personnel landmines" and pledges its cooperation in negotiating an effective, legally binding international agreement to this end. The Sudan is also ready and willing to participate in the preparatory meetings leading to the forthcoming Ottawa Conference, which will hopefully commit those countries which have expressed their readiness to accept some constraints on the kind of landmine that can be used or sold, taking into consideration paragraphs 69 and 70 of the section on "Disarmament and international security" of the Final Document adopted at the Twelfth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries held in New Delhi on 7 and 8 April 1997. We are happy to note that the United Kingdom, under its new Administration, is ready to join the ranks of these countries, and hope that other major Powers will follow this commendable example.

We hope that, in time, an agreement which may be concluded at this juncture will become a truly global arrangement enabling the international community to verify those countries which persist in providing the parties to the various conflicts with the financial and technical means to secure and plant mines, and apply all means of pressure at its disposal to persuade them to desist from producing and providing the mines. We believe that the

(Mr. Sahlool, Sudan)

Conference should give this problem top priority in its agenda, and should not be deflected from pursuing this course by any other priorities, since it is of prime importance to many countries in Africa, and could contribute significantly to their stability and peaceful development.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Sudan for his statement. Would any other delegations like to speak at this stage? I give the floor to the Ambassador of Turkey.

Mr. ULUCEVIK (Turkey): Thank you very much, Madam President, for giving me the floor. Since it is not my intention this morning to speak on the substance of the subjects on our agenda, I venture to reserve my words of congratulation upon your assumption of the presidency of the CD for a later stage of our work when I address the substantive issues.

If you will allow me, I shall dwell on a first-ever event in the history of the United Nations which occurred last week with a direct bearing on the conduct of the CD's business in safety and without hindrance, as well as on the safety and safe movement, within the United Nations premises in Geneva of the members of the delegations to the CD, together with those of staff of the secretariat.

A week ago today, on 22 May, as we were sitting in this very chamber for a formal plenary meeting, at around 11 a.m., some 200 persons or more, brandishing banners belonging to the PKK terrorists, broke into the Palais des Nations and forced their way into the first floor of the main building, smashing glass doors at door 4. They came as close as within 40 or 50 metres of the Salle du Conseil. They occupied the United Nations premises for about five hours. In the course of the episode, the intruders burned the flags of two United Nations Member States who are, at the same time, members of the CD.

Despite the indisputable fact that their abhorrent actions constituted an offence in the form of violation of United Nations property and established rules, with regard to the inviolability of international premises and the security of United Nations personnel and diplomats, the demonstrators were able to perpetrate their attack with impunity. As announced later by the United Nations Geneva Office, the demonstrators were escorted by United Nations security personnel and Swiss police out of the United Nations premises.

Up until this moment we have not yet heard anything from any relevant authority, international or local, as to what legal action has been initiated against those who have actually committed an outright offence, to say the least, by forcibly breaking into the United Nations premises and occupying them for several hours.

Following the despicable event, the United Nations Geneva Office issued a statement expressing satisfaction that the work of the United Nations was not affected, and that the staff continued to fulfil their duties.

(Mr. Uluçevik, Turkey)

Yet I, in my capacity as Permanent Representative of the Republic of Turkey, both to the United Nations Geneva Office and to the Disarmament Conference, was rendered unable to fulfil my duties in the CD on that particular day because of the incident.

We, in Turkey, say that there is always a good in every evil. As a matter of fact, the ominous event of last week has brought to the light of day the fact that there is an urgent need for the implementation of effective security measures for the protection of the inviolability of the United Nations Geneva Office's premises, where the CD is also seated, and to ensure the safety of the United Nations personnel, as well as that of diplomats of Member States of the United Nations and the CD.

Therefore, Madam President, in the light of last week's event, I request you to convey to the distinguished Director-General of the United Nations Geneva Office and, through him, to the authorities of the host country, our concern about the security situation in and around the United Nations Geneva Office premises, together with our request that adequate effective measures be taken to ensure the inviolability of the United Nations Geneva Office and other United Nations specialized agencies' premises, as well as the safety of the representatives of the Member States and United Nations personnel.

I entertain the hope that, as a result of prompt action to reinforce the security measures, anything in the nature of last week's event will not recur in the future.

Any delay in taking necessary preventive action, I am afraid, may give rise to new attacks on the United Nations premises, this time maybe with more nefarious consequences.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Turkey for his statement, and in this connection I would like to recall that this question was raised yesterday during the Presidential consultations by the Coordinator of the Western Group. The Secretary-General of the Conference, in his capacity as Director of the United Nations Office at Geneva, had occasion to explain the situation yesterday, to give an assurance that no effort would be spared in the future to avoid a repetition of this type of highly regrettable incident. Moreover, the Director-General has also informed me that this morning he would be having a meeting with the Chairman of the Diplomatic Committee and with representatives of the host country authorities in order to examine the situation as a whole and to draw all the necessary conclusions from the incident which occurred last Thursday, and to avoid a repetition.

I give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): I have asked for the floor following the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of Turkey. The incident referred to by him was indeed a very serious development. It should not have occurred, but since it has, I think appropriate steps should be taken by the United Nations Office in Geneva, as well as the host Government, with a view to preventing such developments in the future. At the same time, I would like also to mention that there are at least a number of missions which can be described as vulnerable due to various situations. It is also to be noted that the grounds in front of the United Nations Office are generally used by demonstrators coming from various parts of the world to hold demonstrations, and on certain occasions we see thousands taking part in such demonstrations. Fortunately, so far, such demonstrations have been peaceful, but now a precedent has been created and there can be situations where other demonstrators, too, could be emboldened by the incident described by the Ambassador of Turkey, and they may, too, try to develop their own tactics with a view to gaining entry into the building, as well as into diplomatic missions in Geneva. It is, therefore, necessary for the United Nations, as well as for the host Government, to look into this matter carefully, and my delegation is pleased to hear that measures are already being taken to discuss this matter. It is the hope of my delegation that the missions will be informed of the measures taken by the authorities concerned after the discussions are completed so that we can rest assured that there will be no repetition of what happened last Thursday.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Sri Lanka for his statement and I think I can assure him that the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva will inform all diplomatic missions of any measures which are decided on. Are there any other delegations which would like to take the floor? I see none.

I would like to inform you that the consultations commenced by my predecessors about the programme of work of the Conference are continuing. I have detected a resolve, which I think is shared by all, not to spare any effort to break the current deadlock. However, I think that we need a little more time in order to define the incipient consensus on the subject. I would therefore like to appeal to all delegations to display a spirit of compromise in order to enable the Conference to embark on its substantive work. Obviously my efforts will also focus on how the Conference can deal with the important question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference.

I give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): Madam President, I should first like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference. My delegation fully trusts in the leadership you will display in this Conference, and we fully share the concerns expressed in your opening statement. I should like to assure you of the full support of my delegation. With regard to the question we have on hand - and, in particular, I am referring to the text which emerged from our last consultations - my delegation would like to know where the real difficulties lie, because this is a text which amounts to a mere procedural decision, a decision to appoint a special coordinator on

(Mr. Seibert, Germany)

anti-personnel landmines, an idea which, I have learned, has been around for a couple of months, and we had hoped that today we would be able to have a consensus on this paper. If this is not the case, then I should like to ask, through you, whether it is possible to consider this draft text as adopted ad referendum, which would give an opportunity to those delegations which might not have instructions to come in at a later stage, and permit us to proceed with our work. If this does not rally consensus, then I would like to ask you whether we could meet in an open-ended informal meeting to find out where the difficulties lie, in order to accelerate our work here in line with what you have said in your opening statement and, hopefully, we might be able to go ahead with this matter even before the next plenary. So, please could we find out whether it is possible to accelerate this? Clearly, if we are not able to start with consultations in the month of June, then we will probably lose the whole month of July, because it will be difficult for the coordinator to get the appropriate counterparts for his consultations, and the whole matter would be delayed until at least August or even later. So all that we are asking is to find out whether we can exert more effort and goodwill in order to move ahead on this matter.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I wish to refer to yesterday's Presidential consultations, during which we took stock of the situation on this draft decision. One group said that it needed more time to reach a common position, especially as some members are still awaiting instructions from their capitals. Therefore there was no consensus. The President remains at the disposal of the Conference in order to work in the direction that is desired by its members.

I give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Ms. VUORENPAA (Finland): Madam President, I too would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the CD, and I wish to assure you of the full cooperation of the delegation of Finland. I fully support what was just said by the distinguished Ambassador of Germany, and it is the view of the delegation of Finland that this issue is very urgent and that the CD should be able to make a decision on this issue as soon as possible. As you will remember, we came very close to an agreement last week and we would not like to waste what was achieved. We too propose, if there is no objection in this room, that we should continue consultations as soon as possible, preferably today.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Finland for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, we wish to associate ourselves both with the words of praise and satisfaction voiced by some delegations with regard to your taking the Chair and with statements concerning your intention to solve our problems at the pace required and to stress in particular that the point made by Germany is a possible way out. I understand from what you said, Madam, that there are still groups that might

(Mr. Berguño, Chile)

have some difficulty in adopting a common position. I think that logic in our consultations should be directed, should move ahead, in the procedural direction that has been suggested, and in the context of that principle it does not seem to me to be appropriate to operate with a group logic but instead, as indicated by the distinguished representative of Germany, we should move forward ad referendum on this and other matters, as soon as possible, and ask those delegations that are still awaiting instructions to indicate what their difficulties are.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Chile for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I would like to call on the Ambassador of Morocco.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): Madam President, allow me to say how happy I am to see you take up the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament. As I have had occasion to tell you, I would have preferred you to be President at a much happier moment in the work of the Conference, but I am sure that your experience and your diplomatic skill will enable you to carry out our work successfully. I wish you every success and you may depend on the cooperation of my delegation. I wish to say that my delegation has no objection to consultations being held. I merely wish to suggest that, in order to improve the climate in this Conference, it would be useful if, while discussing the Ambassador of Australia's proposal, we could also address all the other issues connected with the programme of work of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi for his statement and the kind words he addressed to me. I wish to call on the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. FASEHUN (Nigeria): Madam President, I join previous speakers to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of this very important body. Last week, a proposal was tabled; it was amended; both the proposal and the amendments have been forwarded to our authorities. Yesterday, as recounted by you, during consultations, there was no consensus on the amended text. Again, we have been asked what are the difficulties. We have been asked to hold consultations, to which we are not opposed. But it seems an unusual proposal, as suggested just now, that maybe the groups should be dissolved. I don't know whether the dissolution of the groups should be on this particular issue or perhaps on all issues. That would be quite welcome, of course. It would just allow us to take different positions without the mediating and moderating influence of the groups. We would then see how the CD would be able to do its work. Maybe others have a magic wand to wave away the differences amongst 61 member States of the CD who, in all their rights, are sovereign and who, according to the rules of procedure, should decide one way or the other how the house should move. But coming back to the issue before us, we wish to state that we are still awaiting the instructions of our authorities. And I might add, every new draft will have to be sent back to our headquarters for decision. So we are not opposed to holding consultations. Whatever may be the result of that consultation will be sent to our authorities, and they will take their time to convey instructions to us. Let me emphasize again that

(Mr. Fasehun, Nigeria)

every new draft will be sent back to our headquarters for instructions. So it is reasonable to suggest that the paper of last week will be considered first. Let the various delegations be given time to react to the proposals. As you said, we may be near what you call incipient consensus. I would just say, let us put "incipient" and "consensus" in brackets. We shall not comment on what is called procedural questions. For some countries, though, what is considered procedural is also quite important. But again, to emphasize, every new draft will have to be sent home, and when we get our instructions, these will be passed through our Group Coordinator, or if we have to state it here, it will be stated openly in plenary.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Nigeria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. On my list of speakers I have the Ambassador of Poland to whom I give the floor.

Mr. DEMBINSKI (Poland) (translated from French): First, Madam President, I would like to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of my delegation's full support in discharging your duties. As regards the problem which is now being discussed here, as co-sponsor of the proposal to appoint a special coordinator on the question of anti-personnel mines, my delegation would like to express its regret that this proposal, which was made more than two months ago, is still being discussed. As has been emphasized here, this is a procedural decision which prejudges nothing, but which would make it possible to move forward in the discussions and the preparations for negotiations in a specific area of very special importance. So in the deadlock we are in at the moment, I would strongly support the proposal made by the Ambassador of Germany a while ago to enable the Conference to move forward or to make some progress in this area; otherwise, there is also the possibility of holding informal consultations after the suspension of the plenary meeting, to enable delegations to speak at greater length on the text which was drafted here last week.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Poland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I would like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, I extend to you the congratulations of my delegation and assure you of its support. We have listened to your statement today and we are sure that you will guide our work for the benefit of the Conference on Disarmament.

A draft has been submitted to us to enable the Conference on Disarmament to deal with the issue of anti-personnel landmines. We have been told that this is a matter of procedure. I believe that in this case form is substance. My delegation and my Government attach great importance to the total prohibition of anti-personnel landmines. We believe that this is an urgent humanitarian matter. We are participating in and we are providing momentum to the Ottawa Process in order to arrive at a total ban on these indiscriminate

(Mr. de Icaza, Mexico)

weapons before the end of this year. We are not convinced that this Conference is the appropriate forum for discussing this matter, on account of its nature, and on account of the methods of work of the Conference. However, if there were to be consensus, and whenever that consensus is attained, we will not oppose consultations being held on a possible mandate and on the necessary arrangements to see how this Conference on Disarmament could deal with the issue. In the absence of such a consensus, we are not convinced that the Conference should deal with the matter of anti-personnel landmines, either from the substantive point of view or from the procedural point of view. To conclude, allow me to quote paragraph 19 of our rules of procedure, which states: "The work of the Conference shall be conducted in plenary meetings, as well as under any additional arrangements agreed by the Conference, such as informal meetings ...". There is no consensus on holding informal meetings on this matter.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Now I would like to give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): I apologize for taking the floor again on this subject. It is just to dispel the idea that by waving a magic wand I might have wanted to abolish the regional groups that exist. I think that the Conference benefits from the groups and I think that benefit might be drawn from many more contract groups. What I do not think is appropriate is to interpret the rules of procedure as involving twofold consensus, that we need consensus among the members of the Conference and we need consensus among the groups. Consensus among the groups is consensus among their members, who are all members of the same Conference on Disarmament. I think that major statements have been made here that we should weigh up correctly. I think we should be grateful for all these statements insofar as they demonstrate a degree of flexibility that we urgently need, and I welcome the fact that the idea that there is an emerging consensus has been expressed by the distinguished representatives.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Chile for his statement. Are there other requests for the floor? I see none.

So we have heard several proposals. First of all the proposal to continue consultations on anti-personnel landmines. There is also a proposal to pursue consultations on the entire programme of work. Certain delegations are not opposed to the holding of consultations, but have already warned that any proposal made would have to be referred to their capitals for instructions. Lastly, there are delegations that say they would not oppose a consensus if one were reached for the holding of consultations. So I would like to be able to say that it appears to me that the Conference would wish us to hold informal consultations after the adjournment of the official plenary meeting.

I give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, forgive me for interrupting you. Perhaps I didn't express myself correctly and the interpreters were not able to follow me closely. I am not opposed to the holding of informal consultations. Nothing and no one can prevent delegates from consulting one another. I am opposed to the Conference holding informal consultation sessions on a subject which my delegation is not convinced is a matter for this Conference as long as there is no agreement and as long as there is no consensus. We have heard that there are delegations that still have no instructions and could not go along with a consensus. Therefore there is no consensus. Nothing prevents you, Madam, from consulting members informally, but not in the form of informal plenaries.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I wonder if there is not some confusion here. I think it is a confusion which is quite natural because of the fact that we, unfortunately, held the informal open-ended consultations last week in this room and it does make us all think that we are, therefore, holding an informal meeting. But I agree with the Ambassador of Mexico: for an informal meeting we do need consensus, but for informal consultations we do not. The arrangement last week was not a meeting. It was an informal consultation which happened to be held in this room. And so I think this is an important distinction because, really, if we are not even able to have consultations of that sort, open-ended consultations without consensus, we really have reached a situation in which the Conference is totally paralysed. But we have not reached that situation. We are able to decide to have open-ended informal consultations and they can, if it is the wish of the President, take place in this room in the way that they took place last week. So I would just make that point.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): After two years of systematic disagreement, it gives me great pleasure to be in total agreement with what Sir Michael Weston has said.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I too am delighted that we are coming to understand each other. Therefore, I would like to adjourn the plenary meeting and, in a quarter of an hour's time, to hold open-ended informal consultations in this room in order to make use of all the facilities available to us.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 5 June at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.766
5 June 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 5 June 1997, at 12.15 p.m.

President: Mr. Dia (Senegal)

GE.97-61532 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 766th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf I wish to extend a warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Evgeny Primakov, who will be our first speaker. I do not believe it necessary to dwell on the personality and career of Mr. Primakov, who has occupied the post of Foreign Minister since January 1996. Suffice it to say that the Minister is a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, that from 1977 to 1985 he directed the Institute of Eastern Sciences of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, and also to recall that he occupied the very important functions of President of the Soviet of the Union of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and member of the Security Council of the Soviet Union. His presence among us today testifies to the personal interest he attaches to our work and the importance that his Government continues to attach to the Conference on Disarmament. I am sure that we will all follow his statement with great interest.

Besides the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, I have on the list of speakers today the representatives of Turkey and Belgium. I invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Evgeny Primakov, to take the floor.

Mr. PRIMAKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Allow me first of all, Mr. President, to congratulate you on taking up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament and to convey to you as the representative of a friendly country, Senegal, our best wishes for the successful discharge of your responsible task. I would also like to convey greetings to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, with whom I have enjoyed personal contacts and friendship for many years. I thank Mr. Petrovsky and his deputy, Mr. Bensmail, for their efforts to ensure the smooth operation of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to begin my address on an optimistic note. We have all observed with enthusiasm the major shifts which, if the positive trend continues, are capable of leading to real international stabilization. Today we can say with assurance that such a possibility really does exist. I would cite the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the Russian Federation and NATO signed at the Paris summit as one of these important shifts which have taken place recently. Its substance reflected the political will of the leaders of the largest nations in Europe and America to take into account each other's security and cooperation interests for the sake of stability in the world. In fact, this has happened for the first time on such a scale since the end of the "cold war".

This agreement was difficult to reach. I will be quite frank about that. Russia, as you know, has had, and still has, an extremely unfavourable attitude to the enlargement of NATO, believing that it can create new lines of division in Europe, which we had started to move away from rather emphatically during the period following the "cold war". It was for the very purpose of minimizing the negative effects of such an enlargement that Russia decided to sign the Founding Act. We will hope that the practical implementation of the

(Mr. Primakov, Russian Federation)

principles and the "code of conduct" laid down in the Act will help to enhance security in Europe. We will be able to ascertain in the near future that our optimism is well founded. I have in mind the negotiations in Vienna to adapt the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe to the new post-confrontation environment in Europe. This adaptation should take place in such a way as to strengthen the security of the States parties regardless of whether they are members of military-political alliances.

European security is our most important priority, but not the only one. I cannot fail to mention a major achievement in a different region - the agreement on mutual armed forces reduction along the border between China, Russia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The agreement sets ceilings for ground forces and combat and defensive aircraft within a 100-kilometre zone on both sides of these borders. The value of this agreement lies not only in the fact that it covers a border of truly enormous length. It creates a model for solving border issues, which are often so sensitive in the Asia-Pacific region.

And finally - this is the last of the positive shifts I would like to speak about loud and clear today before you, but it is by no means the least significant. The world community has achieved significant progress in the resolution of major stabilization problems at the global level. I refer to the outcome of the meeting between the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, and United States President Bill Clinton held in March this year in Helsinki. The Presidents did not merely and not simply confirm their commitment to nuclear risk reduction and the strengthening of strategic stability. They clearly outlined the path towards further reductions in strategic offensive arms. It was agreed that Russia and the United States will embark on negotiations for the START-3 agreement immediately after the START-2 Treaty enters into force. The goal is jointly to ensure that as early as the coming decade the nuclear arsenals of Russia and the United States will be reduced to about a fifth of their size during the "cold war".

This decision links up the ongoing processes in nuclear arms reduction with real prospects of progress in this area - in other words, it links up today and tomorrow. As you know, obligations under the START-1 Treaty are being implemented according to plan and ahead of schedule, in a process involving the United States, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakstan alongside Russia. The next agreement between Russia and the United States of America, on reducing strategic arms by practically half - START-2 - is before the State Duma of the Russian Federation for consideration. We, that is the Russian Foreign Ministry, are striving for the ratification of this Treaty. The achievement of a substantive agreement with the United States to avoid the circumvention of the ABM Treaty will undoubtedly bring us closer to the entry into force of the START-2 Treaty. And this will, as is now clear, ensure the continuity of the process of nuclear arms reduction.

But whatever the importance of progress in reducing the nuclear arsenals of the two major nuclear-weapon States, this, as you can well understand, does not provide a complete solution to the problem of movement by all the nuclear States towards nuclear disarmament. I invite you to agree that the outcome of the Helsinki talks should give an impetus to "systematic" progress in this

(Mr. Primakov, Russian Federation)

field, for which many States call, inter alia, at your Conference on Disarmament. In this connection, I would like to dwell particularly on the important problem of reducing the area in which nuclear weapons are located. Acting together with its Belarusian, Kazak and Ukrainian friends, Russia has secured the withdrawal to its territory of all nuclear weapons left over after the disintegration of the USSR. The President of the Russian Federation has put forward the idea that all - and let me stress this word, all - nuclear States should keep their nuclear weapons only on their own territory. This step would objectively promote further strengthening of stability in the nuclear sphere.

Moreover, Russia firmly supports the growing process of establishing nuclear-free zones in different parts of the world: in Latin America and the South Pacific, followed by Africa and South-East Asia. I take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the idea of our Belarusian and Ukrainian friends to give Central and Eastern Europe the status of a nuclear-free zone. I note that arrangements for the establishment of nuclear-free zones in various parts of the world have gone a long way towards achieving one of the goals which the non-nuclear countries have been pursuing for many years - the provision of assurances concerning the non-use of nuclear weapons (what are known as "negative" assurances). It is known that in various statements Russia and other nuclear countries have provided certain assurances to this effect addressed to the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In addition, the mechanism of nuclear-free zones has established an entire system of agreements which also provide, in a regional context, of course, for assurances set forth in specific legal instruments. Such assurances already cover more than 90 States, and as the number of nuclear-free zones increases, this figure will grow further. We are ready to promote such processes.

It can safely be said that the above-mentioned initiatives and solutions, as well as many other breakthroughs, have not been generated and developed in a vacuum. A solid basis, or at least an atmosphere conducive to their adoption, has been and is being provided by your forum. I would like to note a major success of the Conference on Disarmament, the preparation of the global Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. It paved the way for the first time in history for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. The Convention has entered into force and is reaching the stage of practical implementation. The Russian Federation is committed to the goal of the prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons worldwide. The President of the Russian Federation has submitted the Convention to the State Duma for ratification. Russian deputies have already expressed their intention of completing the process of ratifying the Convention before the end of this year, specifically this autumn.

In 1996, your forum concluded the next historic stage in its work - the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty was signed. That means that one of the priority tasks in the nuclear field is being solved. The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty is a historic document which took almost 40 years to develop. Russia devoted great efforts to make that treaty possible. As early as 1986, we declared a moratorium on nuclear testing. We were later joined by other nuclear Powers. As a result, the treaty has not yet entered into force, but

nuclear testing sites have already fallen silent. The number of signatory States of the Treaty is impressive - more than 140. However, a number of countries have still not signed it. They include States which possess considerable technical potential in the nuclear sphere. Their signatures are especially crucial. We urge the leaders of those States to acknowledge their heavy responsibility and to sign this most important Treaty.

In my view, ensuring the continuous dynamic development of disarmament processes is a historic task. Any pause in this sphere, especially a protracted one, may turn into a setback. In this connection, it would not be an overstatement to say that one of the keys to future stability is to be found in the chamber of the Conference on Disarmament. We would like to see the Conference maintain and enhance its positive negotiating dynamic. This is extremely vital to address the task of steadily reducing resort to the use of force and establishing a stable, democratic world order.

As to the immediate tasks faced by your Conference, we believe that in the nuclear sphere this means a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices. Russia is ready to begin negotiations speedily on this issue here - right here in this multilateral forum on disarmament. As you know, the Russian Federation and several other nuclear Powers have already unilaterally ceased production of nuclear explosives. It is important that the instrument to be drawn up by the Conference on Disarmament should impose a ban on production of such materials on a universal basis, with the participation of both nuclear and non-nuclear States. This would be an additional instrument to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its dimensions.

Another problem which can be actively discussed at the Conference is that of anti-personnel landmines. We share the concern of the international community about their irresponsible use. As early as December 1994, Russia introduced a three-year moratorium on the export of non-self-destructing and undetectable mines. We are considering the possibility of extending that moratorium, and I think a decision to that effect will be taken. We believe that the adoption of a new version Protocol II to the 1980 "Inhumane Weapons" Convention, the so-called "mines" Protocol, would be an important step. The main task now is to ensure the widest possible participation of States in that Protocol. We view the complete prohibition of anti-personnel landmines as a goal which would probably best be approached by means of a series of agreed time stages. With this goal in mind, it is necessary to continue negotiations and to do so specifically in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. It has the necessary negotiating experience and comprises the main States concerned.

Here, with the participation of many experts in this hall, talks are also under way on the issue of verification of compliance with the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons. I would like to reiterate our firm intention to do all we can to promote the development of an effective and fair mechanism based on objective criteria.

In recent months the Conference on Disarmament has encountered difficulties in defining the organizational aspects of its further activities

Mr. Primakov, Russian Federation

after an exceptionally intensive period in its work, namely, the completion of negotiations on the CTBT. I would like to express the hope that the present situation will soon be overcome, since the Conference cannot and must not slacken its activities. We are ready to exchange views in order to agree upon realistic priorities, and to harmonize positions constructively on the whole range of issues on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. The Russian Federation will participate in the search for solutions which can ensure progress in the activities of the Conference and lead to further consolidation of its role as an important multilateral tool for strengthening global stability and security.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation for his important statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I now call on the representative of Turkey, Ambassador Olgucevik.

Mr. OLGUCEVIK (Turkey): Mr. President, in the absence of Ambassador Diallo, the current President of the Conference on Disarmament, I am pleased to take the floor while you are in the Chair as a representative of Senegal, with which Turkey enjoys friendly relations. I wish you every success and assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation. I wish also to pay tribute to the previous President of the CD, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation, for his skilful efforts to achieve progress in the work of the Conference at a difficult juncture. Moreover, it gives me pleasure to extend a warm welcome to our new colleagues, Ambassador Giuseppe Balboni Acqua of Italy and Ambassador Gunther Seibert of Germany. I look forward to working with them constructively.

I should also like to state that I consider myself privileged, though as the result of a mere pleasant coincidence, to address the Conference at the same time as, in the same meeting with, and following the important statement of, His Excellency Mr. Evgeny Primakov, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, with which Turkey enjoys friendly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation. Foreign Minister Primakov's presence today in this Conference and the inspiring speech which he has just delivered illustrates anew the vital leading role which the Russian Federation continues to play in the global nuclear and conventional disarmament process.

May I avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate my Government's satisfaction with the signing of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation? It is no doubt the harbinger of a truly new era in international relations as we move towards the twenty-first century.

With its unique geopolitical position, situated at the crossroads of the East and the West, and the North and the South, together with its historical experience, the Republic of Turkey has always been compelled to attach primordial importance to security requirements. Yet, Turkey has always been, and still is, fully aware of the fact that arming cannot by itself guarantee a country's security. Improvement in international relations, as well as disarmament and arms control activities, forms a vital part of security. With

this awareness, parallel to its efforts to improve political relations and enlarge economic collaboration, Turkey has consistently supported all initiatives aimed at arms reductions and disarmament, treat during disarmament and arms control one of the major components of its foreign policy.

Turkey is committed to the established ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. We believe that this goal must be pursued with realism through a comprehensive and balanced approach encompassing meaningful steps relating to both nuclear and conventional arms. Success in disarmament and arms control initiatives depends, in the first instance, on the creation of a political atmosphere that inspires confidence. Any disarmament or arms control measure, to be effective, must provide for undiminished security for the countries concerned, without upsetting the global strategic balance. It must provide for adequate and appropriate verification. Greater transparency in defence issues is indispensable in order to avoid uncertainty and insecurity. The geopolitical characteristics of specific regions should be taken into account in assessing the consequences of any given disarmament measure.

It is undeniably true that disarmament negotiations cannot take place in a vacuum. They are inevitably affected by the evolution of the international situation and by all the factors related to international security. From this perspective we can confidently assert that the international situation surrounding the work of the CD in 1997 is no less favourable than it was when the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) were successfully negotiated and finalized.

The end of the cold war alone has created an environment in which major achievements in global disarmament and non-proliferation have been made possible.

The first half of 1997 has been marked with meaningful developments in the field of disarmament and arms control.

The CWC entered into force on 29 April. I have the pleasure of informing the Conference that Turkey completed the ratification process and deposited the instruments of ratification with the United Nations on 12 May 1997. We would like to urge other countries which have not yet done so to ratify the CWC as soon as possible. In this connection, we took note of the encouraging messages to the first meeting of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons from President Yeltsin of Russia and the Russian Duma. Turkey's statement by Foreign Minister Primakov before this body is reassuring in this regard.

Moreover, I should like to state that we are encouraged by the progress achieved so far by the Ad Hoc Group tasked with strengthening of the BWC and we hope that the rolling text can be tabled by the Chairman at an early date, ensuring more structured negotiations to commence in July 1997.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, the process establishing the CTBT Organization is fully under way.

(Mr. Ilkocevik, Turkey)

The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference was held in April of this year. We welcome the joint statement made on that occasion by the five nuclear-weapon States expressing their determination to continue implementing fully all provisions of the Treaty, including those of article VI.

The summit meeting in Helsinki on 21 March 1997 between the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States was an important event affecting the disarmament and arms control environment positively. We welcome their agreement, among other things, setting out the basic components of START-3 negotiations.

It is against this background and under the prevailing propitious international climate that my delegation believes that it is high time for us to get down to concrete work before the end of the second session. Our success in achieving this will, to a large extent, depend on our ability to distinguish between the ideal and the feasible. Let us continue to aim at the ideal but let us also forge ahead with whatever is feasible.

It is true that the international community aspires to a world free from nuclear weapons. A global ban on nuclear weapons and their total elimination is the ultimate objective within the framework of general and complete disarmament. It goes without saying that the CD, as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, has an important role in further enhancing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation towards the ultimate objective. Yet as members of the CD, we should not lose sight of the realities of the international security environment. We should not make relatively or comparatively small but meaningful steps in the nuclear disarmament process a victim of overambitious expectations and approaches. My delegation is not convinced that a "blueprint" or a "timetable" for the achievement of the ultimate goal in nuclear disarmament would be more conducive to, or for that matter a viable alternative to, the existing bilateral reductions in nuclear arsenals. In our view, prompt ratification by the Russian Federation of START-2 and its implementation, and the negotiation of START-3, could successfully lead the way to a stage where the other nuclear powers could join the plurilateral process to rid the world of all nuclear weapons.

Having accomplished its work on the CTBT, the CD must continue to play its role in non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament by starting, without further delay, its overdue work on a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, otherwise referred to as the "cut-off convention" (FMCT). In 1995, an agreement was reached in the CD on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on this particular subject. Its mandate was defined in the Shannon report (CD/1299). Therefore, I appeal to all members to support the implementation of the CD's earlier decision and thus establish an ad hoc committee and begin negotiations on an FMCT.

Mr. Ilgezdik, Turkey

We all recognize that nuclear disarmament is only one aspect of the general problem. Arms control and disarmament efforts require a comprehensive approach which should encompass conventional arms as well. In this category of weapons, anti-personnel landmines (APLs) has emerged as a topical issue which deserves attention and appropriate action in the CD.

In Turkey's view, the multidimensional issue of APLs entails the consideration of both the humanitarian and disarmament aspects. There are a number of ways to deal with the humanitarian aspect of the problem short of introducing a total ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of APLs. To cite but a few of these: intensification of demining activities, provision of more demining assistance, victim rehabilitation and the development of demining and victim assistance expertise and technologies in mine-affected countries. Furthermore, declarations of moratoriums on the transfer of APLs should also be encouraged as an initial step in the right direction.

It is with these humanitarian considerations in mind that Turkey put into effect on 1st January 1996 a renewable three-year moratorium on the export and transfer of APLs, and is participating in mine clearance operations in the former Yugoslavia.

Less than a year ago, Protocol II of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) was revised, as a result of which the permissible scope for the responsible and therefore legitimate use of APLs has been delineated. Thus, as a first immediate step, global adherence to the CCW and to its revised Protocol II should also be encouraged. At the same time, in order to alleviate the genuine concerns of many States which foresee the continued operational use of APLs, a number of issues should be identified and dealt with before initiating negotiations aimed at a global ban on APLs. The following questions, not in any way exhaustive, need to be addressed in all their aspects.

Firstly, if the use of APLs is to be banned, how will States protect their frontiers in the absence of a viable alternative, not only against unfriendly neighbours, but also against irregular armed formations which operate across borders and other criminal groups, including smugglers? As part of a solution, interested parties should promote the launching of a multinationally funded project to identify and develop technologies for cost-effective non-weapon alternatives to APLs. We would like to see countries that vigorously pursue the goal of a global ban to apply commensurate resources, political and financial, to such a joint undertaking.

Secondly, what measures will be taken to curb the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of APLs, mainly by terrorist groups, which is at the heart of this problem? In this respect, the problem needs to be addressed concurrently in its demand and supply aspects. Special attention should be paid to the transfer of APLs. We would like to draw attention to the amended Protocol II of the CCW, which has addressed this important element of the problem by introducing the rule that no mine should be transferred to any recipient other than a State or its agent or agencies.

(Mr. Ulucevik, Turkey)

Thirdly, what will be the elements of a verification regime that would be acceptable to all States, one which would be credible and at the same time strike a balance between effectiveness and intrusiveness? This is not a matter to be treated lightly, since our recent common experiences suggest that one of the most thorny areas of multilateral disarmament negotiations is to agree on a verification mechanism.

I believe it is abundantly clear from the foregoing demonstrative set of questions that issues related to the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines fall within the competence of the Conference on Disarmament. In our view, the CD has the necessary experience, expertise and standing to find the right answers to such questions.

We, therefore, invite delegations not to object to the appointment of a special coordinator to engage in consultations to determine the most appropriate arrangements to deal with the question of APLs.

As will be recalled, Turkey was one of the 10 countries who abstained in the vote at the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly on resolution 51/45 S calling for an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines. Turkey did so because of its overriding security concerns over such a global ban. In the view of the Turkish Government, absolute realism must prevail in working out an agreement on APLs, which must be of a universal nature providing for a phased approach towards the ultimate goal. A ban on transfers should constitute the first stage. We believe that our success on the issue of APLs will depend on our ability to reconcile the humanitarian concerns involved with those of security.

Turkey has always supported the concept of transparency in the military area. We consider that it is in itself a measure for building confidence that will reduce mistrust among States, both regionally and internationally. Transparency in armaments carries with it an idea of universality. It is, we believe, a question that is of interest to all countries.

With these considerations, my delegation calls upon the Conference actively to address the subject of "transparency in armaments", which is already an item on our agenda.

Turkey, in keeping with its policy of supporting initiatives to limit conventional weapons, applied for membership in the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 1992. I have today the pleasure of informing the Conference that on 25 April of this year, participating States of the MTCR invited Turkey to join this arrangement. Consequently, my country has started participating in regular meetings held in Paris.

On this occasion, I would like to touch briefly upon a worldwide phenomenon with dangerous consequences. Arms smuggling and illicit arms sales tend to destabilize the domestic political and social order of States and impair regional security. Nowadays a wave of cruel and blind terrorism endangers the social fabric of some States and the conduct of orderly

(Mr. Olgucuk, Turkey)

international relations. Perpetrators of these heinous acts are assisted by the illegal flow of arms. We believe that multilateral disarmament efforts, including those in the CD, cannot and should not ignore this new form of the use of force with the support of clandestine and massive transfers of arms.

To conclude, we believe that the FMCT and APLs offer the CD the opportunity of making tangible progress in its work this year. We hope this opportunity will not be allowed to slip away.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Turkey for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call on the representative of Belgium, Ambassador Mernier.

Mr. MERNIER (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time this session, allow me first of all to congratulate you on taking up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament.

For several years, Belgium has been profoundly aware of the humanitarian crisis caused by the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines. In this regard it takes pride in having been the first to adopt radical measures at the national level totally banning the production, stockpiling and use of and trade in these devices. Obviously, Belgium is in favour of any initiative of any kind which would foster a similar complete ban on anti-personnel landmines at the international level. Thus, it supported General Assembly resolution 51/45 S, a logical stance fully consistent with the joint action of the European Union, which "is committed to the goal of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines and shall work actively towards the achievement at the earliest possible date of an effective international agreement to ban these weapons worldwide".

In July 1995 our Foreign Minister, Mr. Erik Derycke, who at the time was chairing the Conference on Demining here in Geneva, launched the idea of negotiations on APL mines at the Conference on Disarmament. This proposal is still on the table, and Belgium will always foster anything that could, to a greater or lesser degree, lead to its realization. In this spirit we accepted the proposal for the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. As it stands, this proposal does not prejudge the terms of reference for the negotiations that could be undertaken. But for Belgium it goes without saying that in the context of the Conference on Disarmament too it is a total ban on anti-personnel mines which is the goal.

At the moment, we are being faced with the difficulties of all kinds encountered in the CD in connection with the launching of negotiations for a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines. Everything points to the fact that these difficulties will not be eliminated quickly, a state of affairs recognized with disappointment and regret by many delegations, including mine. The humanitarian crisis calls for a rapid response by the international community. We are convinced that this response could come from the Ottawa Process. Belgium supports this process unreservedly. It intends to contribute to it in a manner which is commensurate with its commitment and its conviction. That is why, when the Process was launched in December 1996, my

(Mr. Mernier, Belgium)

Government offered to organize a follow-up conference in Brussels in June 1997, a kind of mid-point conference. I am instructed to inform the Conference on Disarmament of this meeting, which is now imminent. The countries interested in a complete ban on APL mines will meet in Brussels from 24 to 27 June 1997. Very extensive participation - quantitatively impressive, geographically representative of the scope of the problem and the interest attached to its solution - is already assured.

My country intends above all to move this process forward in practical terms. First of all it plans to do so through the adoption of a formal declaration which will unambiguously stake out the limits and objectives of the future negotiations - in other words, the salient features of the planned treaty. This will be first and foremost what paragraph 1 of resolution 51/45 S calls "an effective, legally binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines". The same declaration will announce the resolve of the participants to meet again at a diplomatic conference in Oslo next September for the final negotiation of this text on the already solid basis of work coordinated by Austria. In that regard I wish to pay tribute to the contributions made by Austria and Norway. Another fundamental element in this declaration is the confirmation of the resolve of the participants to complete this task before the end of 1997. The number of countries that will subscribe to this declaration will provide what I might call arithmetical proof of the credibility of the process and its vitality. This political declaration has been distributed in every capital, and therefore everyone is familiar with it.

Above and beyond these tangible contributions, the Brussels Conference is intended to maintain and broaden the already very extensive political support the process enjoys. It will be informed, inter alia, of the many recent regional initiatives to combat APL mines. Several eminent personalities will also have an opportunity to express their views on certain specific aspects, including the military usefulness of mines, demining or assistance to victims.

This is the message that I was asked to bring to the Conference on Disarmament. The urgent need to find a solution to the APL mine crisis is my country's sole motivation in this matter. Belgium will support any initiative which enables this objective to be attained in the context of the Conference on Disarmament as well. It will spare no effort to secure this total ban which the situation demands.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. The representative of Kenya has asked for the floor.

Mrs. TOLLE (Kenya): Mr. President, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation for the manner in which you are conducting our work. Let me also pay tribute to your predecessor, the distinguished Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Berdennikov, for having spared no effort in trying to ensure that there is progress within the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mrs. Tolle, Kenya)

I have asked for the floor today in my capacity as Coordinator of the Group of 21. The Group of 21 is committed to see the work of the Conference on Disarmament commence immediately, and it is in this connection that the Group wishes to table a programme of work for the Conference for the 1997 session, which reads as follows:

"1. The Conference on Disarmament decides to establish:

"I. An ad hoc committee for agenda item 1, 'Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament'.

"II. An ad hoc committee for agenda item 3, 'Prevention of an arms race in outer space'.

"III. An ad hoc committee for agenda item 4, 'Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons'.

"2. The Conference decides to appoint a special coordinator to seek the views of its members on agenda item 6, 'Comprehensive programme of disarmament', with special reference to the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

"3. The Conference also decides to appoint a special coordinator to seek the views of its members on agenda item 7, 'Transparency in armaments'.

"4. The Conference decides further to appoint special coordinators to carry out consultations on the issues of its expansion and agenda as well as improved and effective functioning.

"The Group of 21 continues to attach the highest priority to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament under agenda item 1.

"The Group of 21 has presented on 14 March 1996 a proposal for the work of the ad hoc committee, as contained in document CD/1388.

"In this context, a specific proposal on a mandate for the ad hoc committee will be presented in the near future."

It is the desire of the Group of 21 that this document be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and that this proposal be considered in open-ended informal consultations immediately after this plenary meeting.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Kenya for her statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. The representative of South Africa is asking for the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. GOOSEN (South Africa): I regret that my Ambassador had to leave for another engagement and I consequently make the following statement on his behalf.

I extend my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I also use this opportunity to welcome all of our new colleagues who have joined us in the Conference, and to thank the distinguished Foreign Minister of Russia for his important statement.

I have asked for the floor to make my delegation's position clear on the proposal for a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament which was presented to us today by the Coordinator of the Group of 21. My delegation has agreed to this proposal for the CD's programme of work in a spirit of solidarity with the Group of 21, and because it deals with some issues which are very important to my country. There is also a very urgent need for the Conference to utilize every opportunity in its attempt to break the deadlock which has faced us since January.

As we, however, made clear in the Group of 21 during its negotiations on this proposal, our agreement to its presentation does not reflect a change in the South African Government's positions and policies on nuclear disarmament, and also not on our opposition to the establishment of "linkages" between any of the work which the Conference needs to undertake. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon me to state that the South African Government remains firmly committed to the proposals which it made on security assurances at the 1997 Preparatory Committee meeting for the 2000 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We expect that, in accordance with the formal statement made by the Chairman of the 1997 PrepCom, specific time will be made available at the 1998 meeting to give more substantive consideration to this issue. The authorities in South Africa are currently reviewing their views on security assurances in the context of the proposals made at the 1997 PrepCom. My delegation's agreement to the introduction of the proposed programme of work by the Group of 21 should therefore not be seen as in any way changing the position which we adopted at the NPT PrepCom or our eventual position on the negotiations which will surround the proposal to establish an ad hoc committee for agenda item 4, "Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons".

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of South Africa for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair.

As you know, intensive consultations are going on, both within groups as well as between groups, on the proposal to appoint a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines as well as on the Conference's programme of work as a whole on the basis of all the proposals that have been submitted. I am in a position to inform you that during the Presidential consultations yesterday afternoon, I detected a will to continue the open-ended informal consultations

(The President)

concerning the programme of work of the Conference. Consequently, I propose that these consultations should be continued this afternoon in this room at 3.30 p.m. In response to the request made by the Coordinator of the Group of 21, everything will of course be done to ensure that this document becomes an official document of the Conference.

The Republic of Korea is asking for the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. HWANG (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the Western Group I would like to propose that the open-ended informal consultations take place after 4 p.m. because another meeting is scheduled for the Western Group at 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea. If there is no objection, I think that we can grant his request and hold the informal consultations this afternoon at 4 p.m. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this stage?

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 12 June at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.